

HOUSE BILL 879

By Dixie

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4;
Title 49; Title 63 and Title 68, relative to student
loan repayment for certain mental health
professionals.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 68, is amended by adding the following
as a new chapter:

68-25-101. Chapter definitions.

As used in this chapter, "mental health professional" means:

(1) A licensed physician who is:

(A) A graduate of an accredited psychiatric residency training
program; or

(B) Certified in psychiatry by:

(i) The American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology; or

(ii) The American Osteopathic Board of Neurology and
Psychiatry;

(2) A psychologist, as described in § 63-11-201;

(3) A licensed professional counselor, as described in § 63-22-104;

(4) An advanced practice registered nurse, as defined in § 63-7-126, who
holds a nationally recognized board certification in psychiatric or mental health
nursing;

(5) A licensed clinical social worker, licensed under title 63, chapter 23;

(6) A licensed marriage and family therapist, as described in § 63-22-

106; or

(7) A licensed clinical pastoral therapist, as defined in § 63-22-201.

68-25-102. Mental health professional education loan forgiveness program.

The commissioner of health may select applicants each year for participation in the mental health professional education loan forgiveness program, within the limits of available funding. Participants must meet the service obligation required up to a maximum of three (3) years. The participant must provide the commissioner with verification that the full amount of loan repayment disbursement received by the participant has been applied toward the designated loans. After each disbursement, verification must be received by the commissioner and approved before the next loan repayment disbursement is made. Participants who move their practice remain eligible for loan repayment as long as they practice in a mental health shortage area.

68-25-103. Repayment assistance amounts.

A mental health provider accepted to the program may receive up to seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) for three (3) years of full-time service at a healthcare facility that has been designated by HRSA as an NHSC-approved substance use disorder site. A part-time service option must be made available with a maximum award of thirty-seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$37,500).

68-25-104. Funding.

(a) Funding for this program must come from grants from the new national health services corps of the United States human resources and service administration (HRSA).

(b) Funding for this program is contingent on qualification of this state as a federally designated health professional shortage area.

68-25-105. Penalty for nonfulfillment.

If a participant does not fulfill the required minimum commitment of service, then the commissioner of health must collect from the participant the total amount paid to the

participant under the loan forgiveness program, plus interest at a rate established by rule.

68-25-106. Healthcare access fund.

The commissioner shall deposit the money collected in the healthcare access fund to be credited to the mental health professional education loan forgiveness program account. The commissioner shall allow waivers of all or part of the money owed as a result of a nonfulfillment penalty if emergency circumstances prevented fulfillment of the minimum service commitment.

SECTION 2. The headings to sections in this act are for reference purposes only and do not constitute a part of the law enacted by this act. However, the Tennessee Code Commission is requested to include the headings in any compilation or publication containing this act.

SECTION 3. For purposes of promulgating rules, this act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it. For all other purposes, this act shall take effect January 1, 2020.